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ABSTRACT

This book relates the story of urban Black Americans choosing to return "home" to the rural South. The book is based on research in rural areas in North and South Carolina, considered the top nonmetropolitan areas for Black Americans moving south. By 1975, the U.S. Census Bureau released the first numbers suggesting that the exodus of Black Americans from the southern countryside to the cities of the North and West was over. Black Americans who had spent all or part of a lifetime in large industrial cities were abandoning urban life and moving south, sometimes back to childhood homeplaces. By 1990, the South had regained more than half a million Black Americans who had been lost to northward migration during the 1960s. This book tells the stories of people who traded their city apartments for trailers, old cabins, or brick houses built along southern back roads. Some were pushed, rather than drawn back, by rootlessness, joblessness, and urban decay. Others, made stronger by the uncompromising demands of city life, came home determined to apply the hard lessons they had learned up North to build new lives in the South. Children were often sent home first, either to be cared for by grandparents or to help care for them. This book illustrates the hardships of starting over, of poverty, and of rural life, but it is also relates the story of success, of how people determined to build communities helped to establish the right of Blacks to participate as full citizens in the South. Stories in the early chapters tell of returning home as a personal and family experience. Stories in the final chapters tell of returning as a process of reclaiming a homeplace while responding to social and political challenges, such as community action to provide day care and youth programs. Contains of suggested readings and an index. (LP)

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